MARVEL

5

STAR WARS

HIDDEN EMPIRE

THE GALAXY-SHATTERING CONCLUSION TO THE CRIMSON DAWN SAGA!

SOULE
CUMMINGS
OLAZABA
FAUCHER
GURU-eFX

STAR WARS

HIDDEN EMPIRE

PART 5

"AMAXINE"

DREAMING OF A FREER GALAXY, **LADY QI'RA** AND HER ORGANIZATION, **CRIMSON DAWN,** HAVE WAGED A SECRET WAR AGAINST THE EMPIRE.

QI'RA ACQUIRED A MEANS OF PREVAILING AGAINST THE SITH IN THE ***FERMATA CAGE,*** AN ARTIFACT THAT SUPPOSEDLY SUSPENDED AN ANCIENT SITH LORD IN TIME. QI'RA TASKED THE ARCHIVIST WITH UNLEASHING THIS SITH AGAINST THE EMPEROR AND ACTIVATED HER OPERATIVES ACROSS THE GALAXY TO SERVE AS A SMOKE SCREEN. THE EMPEROR RETALIATED AGAINST CRIMSON DAWN, FORCING QI'RA TO HER STRONGHOLD, DAWNFALL, WHERE A CRIMSON DAWN FLEET PREPARES TO STRIKE AGAINST THE EMPIRE.

SENSING A DISTURBANCE IN THE FORCE, EMPEROR PALPATINE AND DARTH VADER HAVE MADE THEIR WAY TO THE AMAXINE STATION TO SEE THE FERMATA CAGE FOR THEMSELVES AND ARE GREETED BY AN ONSLAUGHT OF CRIMSON DAWN SOLDIERS....

Written by
CHARLES SOULE

Art by
STEVEN CUMMINGS

Inked by
VICTOR OLAZABA & WAYNE FAUCHER

Colored by
GURU-eFX

Lettered by
VC's TRAVIS LANHAM

Cover Art by
PAULO SIQUEIRA & RACHELLE ROSENBERG

Variant Cover Art by
STEVEN CUMMINGS & GURU-eFX (CONNECTING);
DAVID LOPEZ (TRAVEL); **DECLAN SHALVEY** (BATTLE)

Logo & Book Design by
ADAM DEL RE

Assistant Editor
MIKEY J. BASSO

Associate Editor
DANNY KHAZEM

Editor
MARK PANICCIA

Editor in Chief
C.B. CEBULSKI

For Lucasfilm:

Senior Editor
ROBERT SIMPSON

Creative Director
MICHAEL SIGLAIN

Art Director
TROY ALDERS

Creative Art Manager
PHIL SZOSTAK

Lucasfilm Story Group
MATT MARTIN, PABLO HIDALGO & EMILY SHKOUKANI

STAR WARS and related text and illustrations are trademarks and/or copyrights, in the United States and other countries, of Lucasfilm Ltd. and/or its affiliates. © & TM Lucasfilm Ltd. No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons, and/or institutions in this magazine with those of any living or dead person or institution is intended, and any such similarity which may exist is purely coincidental. Marvel and its logos are TM Marvel Characters, Inc. WWW.MARVEL.COM

The Amaxine Station.

THIS GALAXY IS *VAST*, LORD VADER. I MUST RULE IT FROM A DISTANCE, THROUGH PROXIES, PROMISES AND THREATS.

IT IS RARE THAT I AM ABLE TO TAKE A *DIRECT HAND* AGAINST MY ENEMIES. THOSE TASKS, I HAVE LEFT LARGELY TO *YOU*.

I MUST CONFESS...

AIEEE!

ZKK

SLSH

...I'VE *MISSED* THIS.

HKK!

KSSH

SQUADS TWO AND THREE, SWITCH TO MELEE WEAPONS! THEY KEEP THROWING OUR BLASTER SHOTS BACK AT US--WE'LL HAVE TO GET IN THERE AND MIX IT UP.

SQUADS ONE AND 4--KEEP SHOOTING--TAKE OUT THEIR ESCORTS!

HOW DELIGHTFUL.

I'VE DONE IT, QI'RA. THE FERMATA CAGE... IT'S GOING TO OPEN.

GOOD, ARCHIVIST. VADER AND PALPATINE ARE ON THEIR WAY.

I'M AWARE, QI'RA. THEY'RE ALMOST HERE. I NEED TO LEAVE. I DON'T INTEND TO BE CAUGHT BETWEEN THE FERMATA CAGE AND TWO *SITH LORDS*.

OF COURSE, ARCHIVIST. MAKE YOUR ESCAPE. YOU HAVE PLAYED YOUR PART INCREDIBLY WELL. MY SOLDIERS WILL HOLD OFF VADER AND PALPATINE LONG ENOUGH FOR THE CAGE TO OPEN. AND IF THEY CAN'T...

...SOMEONE ELSE IS ON THE WAY.

STOP *TOYING* WITH HIM, LORD VADER. IT IS *BENEATH YOU*.

YES, MY MASTER.

CAN YOU *SENSE* IT, MY FRIEND? THE *FERMATA CAGE*. IT IS *OPENING*.

WHATEVER IT HOLDS WILL BE *INCREDIBLY POWERFUL*--WHETHER AN ANCIENT SITH, AS *QI'RA* CLAIMS, OR SOMETHING ELSE.

THE FERMATA CAGE WAS NEVER USED *LIGHTLY*.

LET US GO, LORD VADER, AND SEE WHAT AWAITS US.

SSK

PSEW

WHAT AWAITS YOU, *SITH*...

...IS *THE SPARK ETERNAL*.

I KNOW EVERYTHING *APHRA* KNOWS. HER MEMORIES. HER *FEARS.*

SHE'S *TERRIFIED* OF YOU. THE DARK LORDS OF THE SITH. IN HER MIND, YOU ARE *DEMONS.*

BUT HERE, IN REALITY, I SEE YOU ARE MERELY...

...MEN.

THIS PERSON IS *KNOWN* TO ME, LORD VADER. AN *ASSOCIATE* OF YOURS, AS I RECALL.

IN A FASHION. SHE IS...CHANGED. *INHABITED.*

DEAL WITH IT AND JOIN ME AT THE FERMATA CAGE.

SOMETHING IS COMING, MY FRIEND. I CAN SENSE IT. I WOULD HAVE YOU AT MY SIDE.

LADY QI'RA REACHED OUT TO ME--TOLD ME YOU AND YOUR MASTER WOULD BE HERE. SUCH A *UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY.* I COULDN'T PASS IT UP.

DO YOU LIKE MY WEAPON, LORD VADER? IT'S CALLED THE *NULL BLADE.* AN ARTIFACT OF THE *ASCENDANT.*

WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW WHAT IT CAN DO?

I CAN TELL YOU IN FOUR WORDS.

IT...

KSHNG

...MAKES...

ZZZZZZKK

SZZLL

...YOU...

...WEAK.

HNGH!

KSSLSH

YOU SEE?

NO.

THWHOOOOOOOOSH

I DO NOT.

WEAK.

FWP

SHHK

N-NO!

THROOM

NGH!

HNH.

YOU CANNOT HIDE FROM ME, APHRA.

YOU SURE YOU WANT TO WORRY ABOUT *ME*, VADER?

BETTER HURRY, VADER!

SEEMS LIKE PALPY'S *UP TO SOMETHING* UP THERE...

YES... YES!

LORD VADER. COME TO ME, MY FRIEND.

STAND BY MY SIDE.

THE FERMATA CAGE OPENS AT LAST AFTER UNTOLD MILLENNIA.

AND HERE WE STAND, THE ***DARK LORDS OF THE SITH***, READY TO FACE WHATEVER POWER WAS LOCKED AWAY INSIDE.

WE WILL ***KNOW***, LORD VADER...

"...AND WE WILL *TRIUMPH.*"

SNNNNPP

TNK TNK TNK

HNH.

IT WORKED, QI'RA.

I CAN SEE EVERYTHING.

I SENSE NOTHING, LORD VADER. THIS IS NOT AN ARTIFACT OF THE SITH OR CONNECTED TO THE FORCE IN ANY WAY.

THE CAGE IS OPEN, AND VADER AND THE EMPEROR...

...ARE RIGHT THERE.

I SEE, ARCHIVIST. THAT MEANS THERE'S ONLY ONE THING LEFT TO DO.

WIN.

THE WOMAN *LIED.*

WHICH MEANS THIS...

...IS A *TRAP.*

TNK

KLK

SSSSSHKK

YES. YES.

"THE FERMATA CAGE CLOSED AROUND PALPATINE AND VADER. THEY'RE *TIME-LOCKED*... JUST AS I THEORIZED."

WE... WE DID IT.

WE'RE NOT DONE YET, *SAVA SUN!*

SEAL THE FERMATA CAGE, SO THE SITH WILL BE TRAPPED INSIDE *FOREVER*. WE CAN GO IN, RETRIEVE THE ARTIFACT AND *THROW IT INTO A STAR.*

YES, YES. OF COURSE.

The *Night Buzzard.*
Transport of the Knights of Ren.

"NOTHING CAN STOP US NOW."

WHOA. THIS IS... A *LOT.*

WHAT DO YOU SEE, REN?

VADER. PALPATINE.

LOOKS LIKE THEY'VE RUN INTO A LITTLE *TROUBLE*.

QI'RA'S ACTUALLY GOTTEN PRETTY FAR WITH HER LITTLE PLAN. WHO'D HAVE THOUGHT?

BUT LET ME ASK YOU ALL A QUESTION. QI'RA'S WINNING. SURE. BUT DO YOU THINK SHE'LL *KEEP* WINNING?

PALPATINE'S A *SITH LORD*. WE ALL KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS. I BET THE EMPEROR FINDS A WAY OUT OF THIS. TODAY, TOMORROW, SOMEDAY.

WHEN HE DOES, HE'LL KILL QI'RA FIRST. BUT WHO'S NEXT? HAVE TO FIGURE HE'LL BE GUNNING FOR THE SCRAPPY BAND OF *DARK SIDERS* STUPID ENOUGH TO RUN A HEIST ON *VADER'S CASTLE*.

WE *TRUSTED* QI'RA, PUT OURSELVES IN HER HANDS, AND SHE TREATED US LIKE DISPOSABLE *IDIOTS*. SHE MADE US INTO ENEMIES OF THE SITH. WE OWE HER *NOTHING*.

OUR ONLY CHANCE NOW IS TO TURN THAT AROUND. IF THE SITH SEE THE KNIGHTS OF REN AS THEIR *ENEMIES*...

"...LET'S SHOW THEM WE'RE THEIR *FRIENDS.*"

KRRRSHK

VRRRRRRRR

KRRRRGGGGK!

VROOOEEEEEEE

OH, QI'RA...SO CLOSE...AND YET *SO* FAR.

7

NOOOOOO!

ALL RIGHT.

ALL CRIMSON DAWN FORCES... I HAVE FAILED YOU.

SCATTER. FLEE. FIND NEW LIVES.

WE ARE LOST.

CRIMSON DAWN FORCES ARE NEARLY ANNIHILATED, ADMIRAL PIETT.

VERY GOOD. CONTINUE THE ACTION. NO SURVIVORS.

GOOD-BYE.

GOOD LUCK.

I SENSE...

AS DO I. WHEN THE FERMATA CAGE COLLAPSED, THERE WAS A GREAT... *RENDING* IN THE FORCE.

EVEN NOW, IT RIPPLES THROUGH THE GALAXY. MY GRIP ON THE FORCE FEELS... *TENUOUS.*

WE WERE TRAPPED.

SOMEHOW, WE WERE *FREED.*

SSK

IT WAS NOT MY DOING.

WAS IT YOURS, MY MASTER?

NO. THAT WOULD BE *US*.

YOU. THE *KNIGHTS OF REN*. PETTY THIEVES WHO THINK YOUR ACTIONS HERE MIGHT EARN MY *MERCY*?

ACTUALLY, YEAH. THAT'S PRETTY MUCH THE IDEA.

YOU WERE...

...MISTAKEN.

AAGH!

KR RCKL

NNNGH...

NOW...WHAT IS LEFT OF YOU... SHALL SERVE *ME.*

I AM SURE I WILL BE ABLE TO PUT YOU TO *EXCELLENT USE.*

COME, LORD VADER.

ENOUGH OF THESE *SMALL MATTERS.*

Cataract Base.

KTTK

CADELIAH. I WISH YOU DID NOT HAVE TO PLAY THIS MESSAGE, BUT I SUSPECTED IT WAS MORE LIKELY THAN NOT.

FOR ONE REASON OR ANOTHER, I AM GONE. BUT YOU REMAIN, AND I WILL NOT LEAVE YOU EMPTY-HANDED. FOR YOU, I HAVE *THREE GIFTS.*

YOU MAY BE ASKING YOURSELF WHY, EVEN BEFORE YOU HEAR WHAT THEY ARE. THE REASON IS SIMPLE.

YOU ARE ME, CADELIAH.

BROUGHT INTO THE CRIMINAL SYNDICATES AT A VERY YOUNG AGE, HEIR TO GREAT POWER. FROM A CERTAIN PERSPECTIVE...TRAPPED.

YOU ARE ME.

MY FIRST GIFT, YOU HAVE ALREADY RECEIVED-- ***KNOWLEDGE.*** I BROUGHT YOU TO ME TO SIT AT MY SIDE AND SEE FIRSTHAND THE CHOICES THAT MUST BE MADE TO LIVE THIS LIFE.

I HOPE YOU HAVE PAID ATTENTION.

THE SECOND... ***RESOURCES.*** ALL THE CREDITS REMAINING IN MY CRIMSON DAWN ACCOUNTS ARE NOW YOURS. THE NECESSARY DETAILS ARE ENCODED ON THIS DISK.

WITH THEM, YOU RECEIVE THE THIRD GIFT--THE ABILITY TO LIVE AS YOU SEE FIT.

THE THIRD GIFT IS ***CHOICE,*** CADELIAH. THE ONE I WAS NEVER GIVEN.

I DO NOT KNOW IF I WON OR LOST. IT'S POSSIBLE I FAILED TO FREE THE GALAXY FROM THE SITH.

I COULD NEVER FREE MYSELF EITHER. NOT WITH A WHOLE LIFETIME TO DO IT.

BUT NOW I KNOW, ONE WAY OR ANOTHER...

...I'VE FREED YOU.

YEARS LATER.
AFTER THE FALL.

CRIMSON DAWN WAS TORN TO SHREDS. QI'RA'S *HIDDEN EMPIRE* WAS GONE.

I NEVER HEARD FROM HER AGAIN. I PRESUME THE EMPIRE OR ONE OF ITS REMNANTS FOUND HER EVENTUALLY.

SHE CAME SO CLOSE, AND YET SHE FAILED. I HAVE SPENT MUCH TIME CONSIDERING THE REASON.

I THINK IT HAPPENED BECAUSE WITH ALL QI'RA'S POWER, ALL HER SKILL, ALL HER INFLUENCE, ALL THE STRONG, LOYAL PEOPLE SHE GATHERED TO HER...SHE HELD HERSELF APART.

SHE NEVER *TRUSTED*. SHE NEVER HAD *FAITH*. OR, TO SAY IT ANOTHER WAY...

...SHE WAS ALONE.

THAT STORY...IT'S ALMOST TOO MUCH TO BELIEVE.

I KNOW, *LEIA*.

BUT THE ARCHIVIST WAS WRONG, I THINK. QI'RA *DIDN'T* FAIL.

BECAUSE OF HER ACTIONS, TWO OF HER AGENTS--***BEVELYN*** AND ***MELTON***, YOU REMEMBER THEM--BROUGHT US NEWS OF THE SECOND DEATH STAR'S CONSTRUCTION.

IF THEY HADN'T, WE MIGHT NOT HAVE KNOWN UNTIL IT WAS COMPLETED...IT COULD HAVE CHANGED EVERYTHING. THE REBELLION MIGHT HAVE BEEN DESTROYED.

AND HER SYNDICATE WAR... IT KEPT PALPATINE OCCUPIED...GAVE OUR FLEET TIME TO REGROUP.

NOTHING HAPPENS IN A VACUUM. EVERYTHING TOUCHES EVERYTHING ELSE. QI'RA SAVED THE GALAXY FROM THE SITH--JUST NOT THE WAY SHE THOUGHT SHE WOULD.

I JUST WISH SHE'D *COME* TO US, LUKE.

I WISH...

"--I WISH SHE'D LIVED TO SEE US WIN."

...BEEN CONFIRMED THAT EMPEROR PALPATINE WAS KILLED DURING A BATTLE WITH REBEL ALLIANCE FORCES IN THE ***ENDOR*** SYSTEM.

WE'RE GETTING REPORTS OF SIGNIFICANT IMPERIAL LOSSES INCURRED DURING THE BATTLE, INCLUDING A MASSIVE ***SPACE STATION*** IN THE SECTOR.

ACROSS THE GALAXY, WE'RE SEEING SPONTANEOUS CELEBRATIONS, AS--

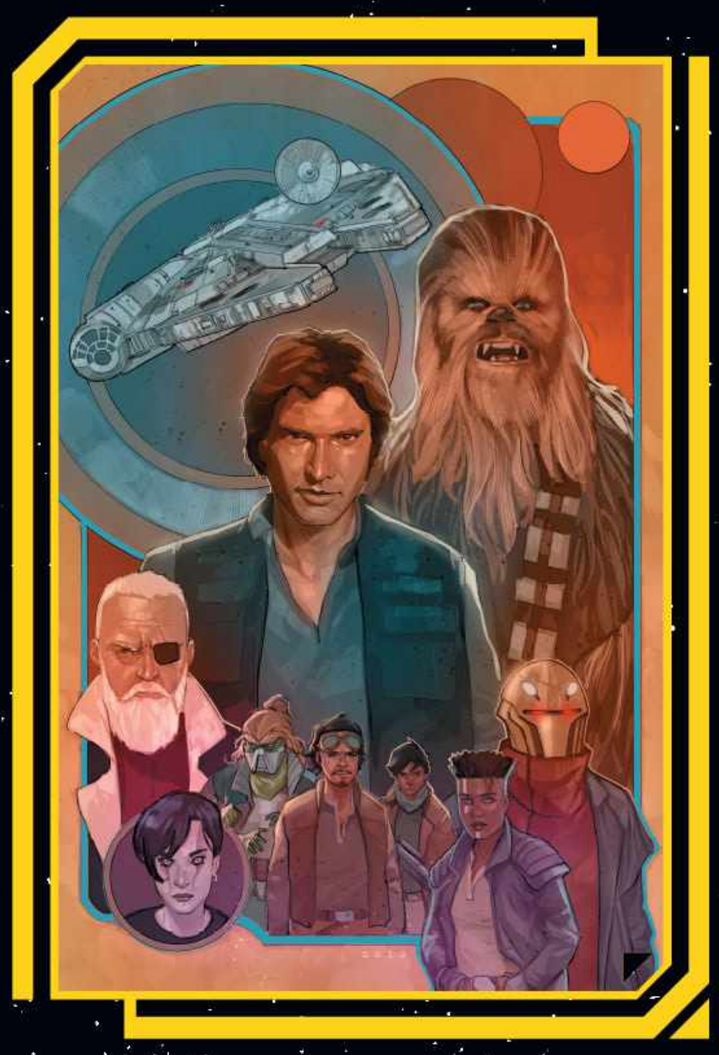
DAMN RIGHT YOU ARE!

THE EMPIRE'S GONE! IT'S REALLY OVER!

THE REBEL ALLIANCE DID IT! I CAN'T BELIEVE IT-- THEY ***FREED THE GALAXY!***

End.

FIRST IT COMES FOR THE METAL....



STAR WARS
HAN SOLO & CHEWBACCA 10

STAR WARS
REVELATIONS 1

STAR WARS
HIDDEN EMPIRE 1-5

?

UNKNOWN
SOON

DEC
2023